

County of San Luis Obispo Agricultural Liaison Advisory Board



**Agricultural Liaison
Advisory Board (ALAB)**

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Mary Bianchi
Ex-Officio

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DATE: October 9, 2009

TO: Mike Wulkan, Planning Department

SUBJECT: Comments on Proposed Revisions to Public Hearing
Draft: Conservation and Open Space Element – Soil
Resources Chapter

At the October 5 meeting, ALAB reviewed Planning Department Staff recommendations for changes to the Public Hearing Draft of the Soil Resources Chapter of the Conservation and Open Space Element, and respectfully disagrees with proposed changes to remove highly productive rangeland soils as a component of our county's Important Agricultural Soils. The suggested changes included the following:

Policy SL 3.1 Conserve Important Agricultural Soils

Conserve important agricultural soils as mapped by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, including Prime Farmland, Soil of Statewide Importance, and Other Productive Soils, ~~and Highly Productive Rangeland Soils.~~ (Also refer to glossary definitions; specific soil map units meeting these definitions are listed in **Appendix 8** and mapped in **Figures SL-3** and **SL-5**.)

Revise Figure SL-5 to remove mapping of “Highly Productive Rangeland” and change the title to “Important Agricultural Soils of San Luis Obispo County”

Revise the soil map units accordingly in Appendix 8

Delete the definition of “Highly Productive Rangeland Soils” in the Glossary

ALAB unanimously moved to keep Highly Productive Rangeland Soils in the policy to protect Important Agricultural Soils. Therefore, the language originally submitted for the implementation strategies for Policy SL 3.1 should be retained. The attached glossary of terms and map include information that is consistent with the Chapter. All other figures in the current review draft should be deleted.

ALAB believes that production of cattle and calves from our county's rangelands consistently represents one of the top agricultural products from our county that in each of the past four years has grossed more than \$50 million dollars. Conservation of our Highly Productive Rangeland Soils represents a critically important policy to support this important economic component of our agricultural economy.

Rangeland soils vary widely in production capability. The best sources of technical information for the productivity of rangeland soils are the USDA NRCS soil surveys, of which there are three primary survey areas in San Luis Obispo County. These surveys closely follow rainfall patterns, which have an impact on forage production. Local range management experts and producers agree that within any individual operation the majority of forage production is from the most productive soils. Therefore, conservation of these highly productive areas of forage production is critical to the sustainability of our county's livestock industry.

Sincerely,

R. Don Warden, Chariman
Agricultural Liaison Advisory Board